

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 to 17 (cancelled).

Claim 18 (previously presented): A method of connecting tubing sections comprising:
for each of the tubing sections:

clamping at least a portion of the tubing section such that a collapsed portion of the tubing section extends past the clamped portion;

covering an end of the tubing section with an energy absorption member, the energy absorption member formed of a material that absorbs energy from an electromagnetic beam;

directing the electromagnetic beam onto the energy absorption member;

transferring heat from the energy absorption member to the collapsed tubing section portion by contact therewith to melt and seal the collapsed tubing section portion in its collapsed configuration; and

removing the energy absorption member;

placing the tubing sections in opposed, end-to-end relation;

positioning a separate sheet of material between axially facing surfaces at the ends of the tubing sections, the sheet being formed of a material which absorbs energy of the electromagnetic beam;

bringing the respective axially facing surfaces of the tubing sections into engagement with the sheet; and

directing the electromagnetic beam onto the sheet for welding the sections of tubing together.

Claim 19 (original): A method as set forth in claim 18 wherein the energy absorption member has low thermal conductivity.

Claim 20 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 19 wherein the energy absorption member comprises a block.

Claim 21 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 20 wherein the block is made of one of polytetrafluoroethylene and glass.

Claim 22 (original): A method as set forth in claim 18 wherein the energy absorption member comprises a film.

Claim 23 (cancelled).

Claim 24 (previously presented): A method as set forth in claim 18, wherein the collapsed portion of the tubing section is an end of the tubing section.

Claims 25 to 26 (cancelled).

Claim 27 (previously presented): The method of claim 18, which includes extending the sheet of material between a supply roll and a take-up roll.

Claim 28 (cancelled).